

**Proposal to the Fiddlehead School for the Arts and Sciences
Strategic Planning Process
December 12, 2023
JD'A Consulting & Coaching**

Purpose

- To convene stakeholders of the Fiddlehead School of Arts and Sciences to ensure its continued impact and relevance to the communities it serves;
- To ensure an inclusive and reflective process to design a strategic framework to guide the school in its mission work for the next 2-3 years;
- To create space and opportunity for stakeholders, including the Board of Directors, faculty and staff, parents of students, and other community members to contribute to the planning process in a meaningful and collaborative manner;
- To create a strategic framework that will guide the school's work in alignment with student, community, and other stakeholder expectations and aspirations, while allowing the school to pivot and course-correct as opportunities or exigencies emerge in the coming years.

Results

The school and its stakeholders will agree the process:

- ✓ Invited and utilized the participation and contributions of those invested in Fiddlehead's relevance and success as a public charter school;
- ✓ Provided opportunity for stakeholders to engage in meaningful ways that strengthened relationship and collaboration;
- ✓ Created a strategic framework that lends clear and informed direction for the school, while allowing its leadership to respond effectively in the evolving environment and changing community, economy, and educational system.

The following broadly outlines a four-step process over the course of 12-14 weeks to develop a strategic framework that will guide the school for the next 2-3 years.

This outline emerged from our conversation on November 29, and is subject to revision. As we discussed, this will be an iterative process, whereby each step will inform the next – and may result in changes to the process as described, as well as the outcomes we're aiming for, at the conclusion of each step.

As written, the proposal assumes the consultant will be working with a small planning team chosen by the E.D. and Board Chair, who can lend time and judgment to help design a process that meets the leadership's expectations.

Step I

The Board and E.D. invite representatives of the staff/faculty to join in a conversation that will serve two purposes: 1) Provide opportunity for staff and faculty to be engaged and share with the Board insights based on their day-to-day experiences, guided by questions offered in advance of

the session; and 2) To ensure the Board is more fully informed about the lived experience of those directly serving students who have greater clarity of how mission translates to operations. The outcome of this session is greater alignment between Board and staff/faculty on what is happening on the ground – “Where we are now” -- and therefore increases the likelihood both can also reach agreement on “Where we need to go”. *Preparation:* Generating the precise questions to elicit both reporting of what’s happening on the ground, as well as generative conversation to begin “visioning” for the future. [Week 1. 2-hour session]

Step II

The Board convenes to assess the content and feedback (ideas, concerns, proposals, aspirations, etc.) offered by staff/faculty in Step I; and sets parameters for the next step of the process, which will include parents and other community stakeholders. In Step II, the Board and E.D. will 1) Decide what content offered by faculty/staff will be carried forward to next steps; and 2) Develop criteria for assessing the impact and sustainability of the content offered.

The outcome of this session will be agreement among the Board and E.D. on the criteria to be used to rank higher- and lower-priority objectives.

Preparation: Presenting in advance budget and other data re: organizational resources for the period of the strategic framework; Development of workshop agenda and advance support by consultant of key Board members and E.D. regarding workshop tools and process.

[Week 3: 3-4 hour session]

Step III

The purpose of this step is two-fold: 1) Report back in writing to staff/faculty that the Board has reviewed their content from Step I and has further defined criteria for evaluating the *sustainability* and *impact* of those proposals/actions going forward in the planning process. And, 2) using an online survey, invite their feedback on the Board’s draft criteria, and invite a preliminary “ranking” of their proposals/ideas (that will ultimately translate to goals and objectives), using that criteria.

The outcome of Step III is a refined list of proposals/actions that has the input of all internal stakeholders and is ready to bring to Step IV, when parents and other community members will be invited into the process.

Preparation: Drafting the online survey; review and revise if needed materials summarizing information from Steps I-III. Other logistics related to administering online survey.

Caveat: Considerable thought should be given to how the staff and faculty input and feedback should be obtained, and whether this is a process into which *all* staff/faculty or a representative sample are invited to participate. It’s understood that this step of the process could be more labor intensive than expected.

[Week 8: 1-2 hr. session of planning team]

Step IV

This is the “public” and all-inclusive step in the process, when Board members, faculty and staff, parents and others from the community will convene and engage in a process to further develop and refine goals articulated in earlier sessions and refine and rank objectives for each goal. This session will be an in-person sessionⁱ, with opportunity for remote observation. As stated earlier, this would be the final step in an iterative process informed by earlier outcomes; however, it is

envisioned as a process that could invite participants to take a “gallery walk” in pairs to assess draft goals and objectives that are posted on the wall; ask them to offer revisions or refinements; and in a final step, convene in small groups to rank or prioritize objectives, using the criteria identified earlier by the Board in Step II.

Preparation: Extensive planning to design a large in person/hybrid interactive session; logistics including but not limited to securing and setting up meeting space, development and distribution of materials, tech support for remote observation or participation, etc.

[Week 12: 2.5-3 hour session]

The consultant and planning team will decide what form the “strategic framework” takes, and how many versions are required: e.g., is an internal, more detailed document/dashboard expected to guide the work of internal stakeholders, in addition to an executive summary for external stakeholders?

These and many other questions can and should be asked and answered, and I look forward to the opportunity to do so with you in a future conversation, should I be selected to work with you.

For the services described and the estimated time I have projected with this outline, JD'A Consulting, Inc. proposes a contract fee of \$10,700 - \$12,000. The services provided will include guiding planning sessions; design of the agendas for and facilitation of the stakeholder sessions; and written summaries of the sessions. Required travel will be invoiced at the current government rate of \$.655/mi.

Thank you for this exciting opportunity to work with Fiddlehead School for the Arts and Sciences, as it embarks on this exciting second decade of serving Maine students!

ⁱ This could be a hybrid session with remote participants if FSAS has tech capacity to administer a participatory hybrid meeting